

MHGP

April 26th, 1954

Dr. A. Wetmore, Home Secretary,
National Academy of Sciences,
2101 Constitution Avenue,
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Dr. Wetmore,

In accordance with your letter of December 2, 1953
I am enclosing herewith a complete bibliography and a short curriculum vitae, to which I can add the following:

Home environment: as a child: My father, a traveling salesman, left much of the education of my brother and myself to my mother, who taught us the equivalent of a primary school education at home. Neither my mother, born in Norfolk, Virginia, nor my father, born in Philadelphia, had had the advantages of a college education, but they had read widely, exposed us at a very early age to concerts, museums of art and natural history, and insisted on a speaking knowledge of French and German.

At the age of eight I had decided to be a chemist, without any very clear idea why. Shortly afterward I was given a camera and a microscope and did my own developing and printing and made many slides.

After several years in public grammar school I was sent on a partial scholarship to the then Workingmen's School of the Ethical Culture Society, a religious group of which my parents were members. In their High School I was able to take courses of a year each in Botany, Zoology, Physics and Chemistry, and four years of advanced mathematics, an excellent preparation for the career in chemistry I was determined upon. I also studied clarinet, and have kept on playing.

Although my father was not well able to afford to expense, he sent me abroad after I had received the Ph.D. degree. The resulting year's experience with Willstätter in Zurich was of enormous benefit and was directly responsible for my first job, on my return, at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research.

Other major influences: There, in nine years of synthetic organic chemical research in chemotherapy, under Dr. Walter A. Jacobs, I learned many new techniques and best of all, how to carry forward many different things at the same time.

My first exposure to immunology resulted from Dr. Karl Landsteiner's interest in the immunological properties of crystalline oxyhemoglobin, which I prepared in Dr. D. D. Van Slyke's laboratory. While working on this, Dr. O. T. Avery proposed that I join him in elucidating the nature of the so-called "soluble specific substances" of pneumococcus, and it was this work that made an immunochemist of me. These substances, determinants of the type-specificity of pneumococcus, seemed ideal reagents for the study of the mechanisms of immune reactions, and it was this field, developed through the introduction of quantitative analytical micro-methods, that I have pursued since, at the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Heidelberger